

# Kern COG Quarterly

BETTER PLANNING. BETTER TRANSPORTATION.



**Kern Council  
of Governments**

SPRING/SUMMER 2014

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## Public weighs in on \$11.5 billion Regional Transportation Plan

Approximately 8,000 Kern residents have weighed in with their thoughts on plans for more than \$11.5 billion in transportation projects throughout the region over the next 26 years, including \$4.2 billion for operations and maintenance and nearly \$7.4 billion in network and capital expansion.

The funding is contained in the 2014 Regional Transportation Plan and Sustainable Communities Strategy, a 26-year master plan for Kern's regional transportation network that includes planned expenditures for local roads, state highways and freeways, public transportation and bicycle and pedestrian facilities. An environmental impact report and air

*Please See Regional Transportation Plan, page 4*



*Kern COG Regional Planner Linda Urata, center, leads a discussion on energy efficiency during a Regional Transportation Plan workshop in Arvin.*

## \$40 million targeted for air quality, maintenance projects

Kern COG's Board in February approved more than \$40 million in projects between two federal-aid transportation programs primarily targeting roadway maintenance and air quality.

Kern COG opened a call for projects for both the Regional Surface Transportation Program (RSTP) and the Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality Program (CMAQ) in April 2013.

The \$20.5 million in RSTP funds earmarked for 2014/15 and 2015/16 include roadway rehabilitation and reconstruction projects throughout the county, including \$678,000 for Ridgecrest officials to resurface S. China Lake Boulevard from Bowman Road to College Heights Boulevard; and \$626,880 in Delano to repave High Street from First Avenue to Woollomes Avenue.

Another \$19.8 million in CMAQ dollars for the same period will cover 31 different projects such as surfacing unpaved shoulders, traffic signalization improvements, natural gas fueling

station expansions, bike lane facilities, a park-and-ride lot and transit vehicles.

Near Bakersfield, the County of Kern will pave shoulders along Old River Road from State Route 166 to Interstate 5 for \$1.52 million. A similar project along California City Boulevard from State Route 58 to the California City limits will receive \$1.44 million

For the first time, the Kern COG Board also approved a list of CMAQ "substitution" projects in March to avoid a potential loss of federal-aid funding should some projects fail and to allow for faster delivery if more funding becomes available.

Approximately \$7 million was identified for 2016/17. Included in the substitute project listings are surfacing unpaved shoulders and streets, bike lanes, and transit vehicles.

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## Westside Parkway changing Bakersfield's circulation, economy

Nine months after the Westside Parkway first opened to the public, its effects on Bakersfield's daily commute are still being felt.

While not the first project completed by the Thomas Roads Improvement Program, the Parkway is the largest and has had the greatest impact. The five miles of new freeway have greatly improved traffic circulation in western Bakersfield, resulting in shorter daily commutes for thousands of residents. In addition, the new facility has yielded long-term, community-wide economic benefits while reducing the numbers of idling vehicles, which produce the most air pollution.

The Westside Parkway's economic benefits began with construction. Local residents made up nearly 80 percent of the project's workforce and the construction team included nine local subcontractors. Supplies and services were purchased from more than 100 local businesses.

Long-term economic benefits include time and fuel savings on the surface; still, an efficient transportation network is also essential for the region's continued economic competitiveness. Transportation accessibility is nearly always a factor when it comes to business retention and attraction decisions and is especially vital for Kern's key industry sectors.

Once the Westside Parkway connects with State Route 58, via the proposed Centennial Corridor, the project will create a direct connection to Interstate 5, further enhancing goods movement and improving regional connectivity. *(The Centennial Corridor Project's draft environment document is expected to be released in late spring.)*

The Westside Parkway is part of a \$1.3 billion program of projects managed by the Thomas Roads Improvement Program (TRIP). Three other TRIP projects are already under construction, including the final phase of the Westside Parkway; the State Route 178/

Morning Drive Interchange; and the State Route 58 gap closure. Four projects, totaling nearly \$160 million, are set to begin construction in the next year. These include beltway operational improvements, the Hosking Avenue interchange and widening projects on Rosedale Highway and State Route 178.

Completion of all the TRIP projects will provide a thoroughly improved surface transportation network, magnifying the benefits realized with the Westside Parkway.



Cars end their trip on the Westside Parkway at the Truxtun Avenue Extension in Bakersfield.

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## Bakersfield bike improvements net \$400,000



Kern Council of Governments and the Kern County Roads Department have received nearly \$400,000 in grant funds to improve bike facilities in east Bakersfield.

Funded by a \$398,799 grant from the San Joaquin Valley Unified Air Pollution Control District, the project will construct bicycle lanes and other amenities in an area generally bordered by College Avenue, Morning Drive, Brundage Lane and Mount Vernon Avenue.

Kern COG is serving as the grant recipient, while design, engineering and construction will be handled by the Roads Department. Construction is anticipated in summer 2014.

The project is expected to reduce the number of vehicle trips by 2.4 million and reduce vehicle miles traveled by 4.3 million miles, according to Kern County Roads Department officials. Based on an average trip length of 1.8 miles, regional air will be spared more than seven tons of greenhouse gases and particulate matter.

## 2013 Regional Awards honor 12 for community service

More than 150 people gathered at the Petroleum Club in Bakersfield in March to honor 12 individuals, organizations and programs for making major contributions to this area's quality of life through innovative, cooperative efforts during Kern COG's annual Regional Awards of Merit Program.

The 2013 Regional Awards of Merit recipients, as decided by a Kern COG Board subcommittee, are divided among eight broad categories and included:

### Local Government:

- **The City of Tehachapi** for its progressive General Plan 2035, with a focus on development design.

### Journalism:

- **Rebecca Neipp** of the Ridgecrest News Review for her dedication to a range of issues affecting the community, including a specific focus on accomplishments at the Naval Warfare Center Weapons Division, China Lake.

### Community Involvement:

- **The Kern County Museum** for planning and delivering Kern County's first Nut Festival.
- **Pastor Bill Lewis** of the Griffith Avenue Baptist Church in Wasco for his work organizing the city's only homeless shelter.



Garden Pathways Executive Director and former Kern County Supervisor Karen Goh was one of 12 individuals or organizations to receive a 2013 Regional Award of Merit.

Please See KCOG Awards, page 4

## Way to Go Kern County! Rideshare, 511 ads launch

Marketing efforts for two different Kern COG programs will hit a peak this summer, with new radio jingles, outdoor advertisements and even movie theater slides for CommuteKern and Kern 511.

Kern COG's rideshare program CommuteKern has kicked off a spring promotional campaign reminding Kern commuters about the many Ways to Go!

Travelers should start seeing new outdoor billboard advertising and even



### COMMUTEKERN

Because You're Going Places!

hear a jingle or two advertising the Way to Go campaign. Commuters who ride the bus, take the train, ride their bike or even walk to work or school are ridesharing, too.

Commuters interested in ridesharing can visit CommuteKern's website for a free ridematching service. By entering some profile information, travelers are matched with other commuters who live and commute in the same general direction. A quick email may allow for a daily connection.

At the same time, Kern COG's 511 service encourages local commuters to Know Before You Go! By calling 5-1-1 or checking out the website, Kern511.org, travelers can receive real-time traffic information, including the latest road conditions.

With the latest in construction, accident or weather updates, Kern 511 offers detour information and delay times. Kern 511 also links to other services such as Amtrak, GET Bus, Kern Regional Transit and CommuteKern's rideshare program. You can also link to other 511 services to see what the road and weather conditions look like in the direction you are traveling.

So this summer, when you're preparing for your vacations and road trips, don't forget to share the ride and know before you go!





## Regional transportation plan: Emphasis on fixing what we have (Continued from page 1)

quality conformity analysis accompanies the plan. Some of the plan's highlights include:

- An emphasis on “maintaining, fixing and finishing what we have,” reflected in a funding plan that provides adequate resources for transportation network maintenance.
- A 700 percent funding increase for bicycle and pedestrian facilities over the 2011 plan.
- Improvements to mobility and congestion relief through strategic infrastructure investments and capital expenditures.
- Nearly 3.5 times the number of housing units within walking distance to high-quality transit, defined as those bus lines with no more than 15-minute headways.
- A 32 percent decrease in farmland converted to housing outside of cities' spheres of influence.
- At least a 5 percent reduction in health expenditures because of improved air quality.
- At least a 10 percent decrease in household water use.

Public outreach on the plan began more than two years ago and included 16 public workshops, two telephone surveys and survey game booths at the Kern County Fair and other regional festivals. Kern Council of Governments' Board of Directors will consider adopting the Regional Transportation Plan and its associated environmental and air quality conformity documents in June.

The Board will also consider the 2015 Federal Transportation Improvement Program, a short-range expenditure plan that identifies projects and programs expected to receive federal, state and local funding over the next five years. Finally, the Regional Housing Needs Allocation Plan identifies the number of housing units required in each community to keep up with anticipated population growth.

Copies of all three documents are available at Kern COG's office, in all county libraries and online at: [www.kerncog.org](http://www.kerncog.org)

## Regional Awards: Taft, Wasco, Shafter among honorees (Continued from page 3)

### Community Involvement Continued:

- **The West Side Health Care District** for its continued service as the only urgent care provider in Kern County's rural, westernmost region.
- **The West Side Recreation and Park District** for innovative programs on a limited budget that bring some fun to residents in the 400 square miles surrounding Taft.

### Transportation:

- **Caltrans District 6 – Bakersfield and Bodfish crews** for their efforts to keep traffic flowing after rock slides on State Route 178 through the Kern River Canyon.
- **City of Bakersfield/Thomas Roads Improvement Program** for delivering the Westside Parkway, which represents the first five miles of new freeway built in Bakersfield in nearly 40 years.

### Richard A. Maxwell Public Safety:

- **Bakersfield City Councilmember Bob Smith** for his work to improve bicycle safety and to educate the public about the importance of sharing the road.

### Darrel Hildebrand Distinguished Leadership – Public Group or Individual:

- **Karen Goh** of Garden Pathways for developing programs to mentor, train and educate our region's at-risk youth.

### Ronald E. Brummett Lifetime Achievement—Public Official:

- Shafter City Manager **John Guinn** for his 30 years of service to his city and the surrounding area, and for making Shafter one of the most economically prosperous small cities in California.

### Chairman's Award of Regional Cooperation:

- **Louis Gill**, executive director of the Bakersfield Homeless Shelter, for his dedication to and advocacy of the region's most vulnerable residents.

Kern COG celebrated 23 years of recognizing those programs and people in our region whose ideas and hard work have made life in Kern County better for us all.